

WSPCCA heals Cape children's hearts

Life-saving heart surgery now being carried out for underprivileged Cape children

East London and Cape Town, 25th February 2010 - The Walter Sisulu Paediatric Cardiac Centre for Africa (WSPCCA) has expanded its presence outside Gauteng with the establishment of a pilot project at the Netcare Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital in Cape Town.

The WSPCCA is a charity organisation, operating out of the Netcare Sunninghill Hospital in Johannesburg, which raises funds to pay for life-saving surgery for underprivileged children from across Africa with congenital heart disorders.

Chris Tilney, the hospital manager at the Netcare Christiaan Barnard Hospital says that the opening of a satellite unit of the WSPCCA in the Cape represents an incredible opportunity to extend the work that the centre currently carries out in Johannesburg.

"The idea of expanding the reach of the WSPCCA into the Cape is one that has been in the making for some time now," he says.

"There are a number of children on our doorstep who have heart conditions that can be successfully and cost-effectively treated in a relatively short timeframe, which will enable them to go on and live normal, healthy lives.

"Thanks to the support of Netcare and the Heart-for-Heart Foundation from Germany, the WSPCCA has been able to fund this pilot project.

"If successful, it will enable us to accept a number of children, particularly from the under-served Eastern Cape area, for corrective heart surgery - who would otherwise be put on long waiting lists for surgery or would not benefit from intervention at all," he adds.

According to WSPCCA CEO, Lynda Bleazard, the community that the Netcare Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital provides services to is very diverse, from fully funded medical aid patients to the less privileged.

"With our values firmly set in helping underprivileged children with access to corrective cardiothoracic surgery, the Netcare Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital was a natural choice for us to expand the reach of the foundation."

The hospital has agreed to conduct the corrective surgery and intervention on patients for a substantially-discounted rate, which is the same rate that is charged by Netcare Sunninghill Hospital and its multi-disciplinary medical team.

Since December, two children - Sino Vuyo Sibidla (7) and Omelela Tshukuza (7 months) have already been operated on at the Netcare Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital and a third child - Zingce Nogogo (7 months) - is currently in the hospital recovering from surgery. All three children are coincidentally from East London in the Eastern Cape.

Dr. Susan Vosloo, cardiothoracic surgeon at the Netcare Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital, says that all three children are recovering well from their surgery.

"Sino and Omelela have already been discharged and their prognoses are both very positive. However, due to the complexity of Sino's surgery, she will need follow-up treatment in the near future. Zingce should be discharged very soon," she says.

"We're delighted to be involved in such a worthy cause," Vosloo adds. "There is so much potential to do a lot of good throughout the Cape through this project.

"And with the support of the WSPCCA and its generous sponsors, we will undoubtedly be able to make a huge difference to the lives of children who are desperately waiting for corrective heart surgery, and possibly even ease the load on the public sector healthcare system," she concludes.

ENDS

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